

## ARGENTINE REPUBLIC.

It has already been stated that a National League for the Prevention of Tuberculosis has been founded in the Argentine Republic. More recently a proposal for the creation of sanatoria for the poor has been submitted to Congress.

## ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OF DEFECTIVE AND EPILEPTIC CHILDREN.

## EARLY WORKERS.

We have for many years drawn attention to the clinical study and treatment of those children who from constitutional defect or disease of the brain and the senses, or from some physical infirmity, are incapable of receiving proper instruction in the ordinary public elementary schools. The general recognition of this class of children is largely the outcome of the labours of a Committee of the British Medical Association and Charity Organisation Society, who issued a report<sup>1</sup> with tabulated statements and recommendations concerning 100,000 children examined individually (1888-92) by Dr. Francis Warner and other medical men; while scientific investigation has since been continued by the Childhood Society in co-operation with a Committee of the British Association. That report, with various papers that have been read before medical and scientific societies, and published works on the observation of childhood, have now placed the study of the development and brain status of children on a scientific basis, so that it has become possible to describe the physical and mental status of a child in the form of a clinical record, to which the experience gained by teachers and others as to mental ability in school work may be added, forming a statement of the child's condition leading to appropriate treatment and management. The inquiry made shows about 1 per cent. of the child population as somewhat deficient in mental power, the proportion of boys being higher than girls; this is confirmed by the reports of Departmental Committees.

## THE OCCURRENCE OF FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS.

Feeble-mindedness is not confined to any social class; cases are to be found alike in town and country, in the families of intelligent persons as well as among the pauper and lower classes. The child backward in walking and talking should be carefully examined; early treatment and care are needed to rectify conditions remediable by medical treatment, hygiene, and training.

## THE NEW ACT.

The Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, 1899, was framed to give effect to the recommendations of the Departmental Committee which was appointed in 1896 to inquire into the existing system for the education of feeble-minded and defective children not under the charge of guardians, and not idiots or imbeciles. The Act is permissive, but otherwise it carries out, substantially, all the recommendations of the Committee. Special classes for defective and epileptic children have already been established by the School Board for London and in other places, with good results; but the ordinary grant is not sufficient to cover the extra expense incidental to the effective management of such classes. The children to be dealt with are described as "what children in this district, not being imbecile, and not being merely dull or backward, are defective—that is to say, what children by reason of mental or physical defect are incapable of receiving proper benefit from the instruction in the ordinary public elementary schools, but are not incapable by reason of such defect of receiving benefit from instruction in such special classes or schools as are in this Act mentioned," etc.

An important principle clearly laid down in the Act is that the school authority "shall provide facilities for enabling any parent, who is of opinion that his child ought to be dealt with under this Act, to present such child to the school authority to be examined, although he may not have been required so to do by that authority"; thus recognising the rights of the parent to obtain education for his child. It is further enacted that "for the purpose of ascertaining whether a child is defective or epileptic.....a certificate to that effect by a duly

qualified practitioner approved by the Education Department shall be required in each case. The certificate shall be in such form as may be prescribed by the Education Department." The school authority is also required to make provision for the examination from time to time of all those children, in order to ascertain whether the child has attained such a mental and physical condition as to be fit to attend the ordinary classes of public elementary schools; a parent may claim examination of his child at periods of not less than six months' interval. A School Board that makes provision for these children in special classes or in any home of residence will have to obtain a certificate with each child, and it will become the duty of the Education Department to prescribe the form of certificate to be used. This Act will also concern children in schools under supervision of the Local Government Board and Home Office where they make provision for the feeble-minded; probably some of these cases will be transferred to the care of school boards. We speak of the importance of the certificate in each case, because large powers are given to the school authority in dealing with defective and epileptic children. The Act provides that the school authority may cause any child to be presented by the parent for examination, presumably on the order of the school attendance officer; obligation is placed upon the parent to provide education for his defective or epileptic child, and guides or conveyances to school may be provided. A defective or epileptic boy or girl is deemed to be a child until the age of 16 years, during which period school attendance is compulsory. The Education Department will certify these schools for defective children and give grants of public money, while the school authority must make such returns as are required.

## SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE "ADMISSION CERTIFICATE."

In the working of this Act difficulties will have to be overcome in meeting the respective interests of the parents and their children, the school authorities, and the public; it will greatly facilitate the difficult task of the teachers to be informed by a medical certificate on admission of a child as to his condition and the particular defects that need attention in training. We would suggest that the admission certificate should show (1) defects in development, (2) defects in brain action, (3) physical status and health, (4) results of mental examination; facts communicated by others might usefully be added. Information thus supplied would be valuable when a defective child was admitted to a home, and would afford the opportunity of noting improvements as training proceeded.

## SPECIAL HOMES.

A school authority is empowered to establish special homes for defective children, but it is directed that no establishment shall be certified for boarding and lodging more than fifteen defective or epileptic children in one building, or comprising more than four such buildings. The National Association for Promoting the Welfare of the Feeble-Minded issued their third annual report this year; though the work has been carried on under the discouragement of deficient financial support they have succeeded in establishing three training homes, which are in good working order; each under the care of a matron and the superintendence of the honorary medical staff. The report says: "There is now no doubt that the conscience of the nation has awakened to the injustice and criminal folly of allowing feeble-minded boys and girls to grow up with their mental faculties undeveloped however small they may be, and their animal instincts unchecked, and this year will be a memorable one in the educational world, if only on account of the fact that the Government is at length making it possible for the school authorities of England to educate and train in the best possible way the defective children whom they have hitherto been obliged to neglect."

## THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS.

This Act of Parliament gives opportunities for the education of children defective in mental and physical power; to carry this out many additional training homes will be needed, while classes of special instruction should be established in all large centres of population. It is equally urgent that a body of teachers should be selected and trained for this special work, which calls for the best resources of education adapted to these subnormal brains in their many varieties. The direction of scientific methods of exercising and co-

<sup>1</sup> Published at the Parks Museum

ordinating brain action, as well as in cultivating its general health, requires much skill in mental science based upon the observation of children; the ordinary processes of mind expansion do not occur spontaneously in defective brains, and modes of brain action must be implanted and cultivated with its growth. The subjects of study required by the teachers of these special classes are to some extent included in the syllabus of the Sanitary Institute's examination in Practical Hygiene for school teachers: this might be supplemented by a practical course of scientific instruction in the observation and description of children.

Knowledge of methods of management and treatment, as well as a widely-spread public interest, have followed the investigations of the mental and physical conditions of childhood, conducted during the last ten years on scientific principles which are equally applicable to the educational treatment of an individual child, whether normal or subnormal in brain power.

#### THE PREVENTION OF FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS.

At least as much importance attaches to the means of preventing mental feebleness as to the treatment of defective children. When myopia and adenoids—which not uncommonly occur together—are neglected, children are apt to be mentally backward in their school life; neglect of treatment leads to imperfect appreciation through the senses, resulting in deficient mental training. Crippled children may have good brains, though their physical defects prevent the ordinary means of education, which need to be adapted under the circumstances. Choreic children who have had several such illnesses are often delicate, but are not usually exceptionally dull if the necessary advantages are afforded them. In times past it was often thought necessary to leave the epileptic children without education; modern experience has shown that full, healthy occupation, which may be made educative, increases brain stability and tends to save mental power; while, when the fits begin to pass off, systematic education under due supervision may prevent that degree of mental inaptitude and irritability which so often follows epilepsy. Even the imbecile infant, if well trained from the earliest days, may become well behaved, of good habits and social appearance; whereas, when neglected, he is apt to grow up unsocial and a greater burden to others than needs be. In all cases of congenital defect early diagnosis and good management are necessary.

#### LITERARY NOTES.

DURING the last scholastic year no fewer than 671 theses were presented to the University of Paris for the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

According to the *Publishers' Circular* Messrs. W. Thacker and Co. have in preparation a *Handbook of Clinical Veterinary Surgery*, and a *Handbook of Clinical Veterinary Medicine*, both by Mr. F. T. Barton.

Among forthcoming books likely to be of special interest to members of the medical profession is the *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley* by his son, Mr. Leonard Huxley. The book, which is to be illustrated with plates and portraits, will be published by Messrs. Macmillan.

Messrs. Archibald Constable and Co. issue this month the first volume of a *Physical Atlas* which will consist of seven volumes dealing respectively with Geology, Orography, Hydrography and Oceanography, Meteorology, Botany, Zoology, Ethnography and Demography, General Cosmography and Terrestrial Magnetism.

A new review, the purpose and scope of which may be gathered from its title, *La Tuberculosis*, is to be published at Buenos Ayres. The editor is Dr. Enrique Tornú, who announces that the new periodical is intended for the public as well as for the medical profession. Five thousand copies of each number are to be printed, and the price is to be 20 cents, "the payment of which is left to the goodwill of the subscriber, who will continue to receive it anyhow, whether he pays or not." This is magnificent, but it is not business. An editor who proclaims beforehand his indifference whether his subscribers subscribe will have no reason to complain if they do not.

In the last number of the *Journal of Anatomy and Physiology* Professor Macalister contributes an excursus on the term, "tendo Achillis," which he shows to be of comparatively late origin, and, what one is less prepared to hear, of equivocal significance. Hippocrates, it appears, was aware of the "great cord," but knew not the tendo Achillis; Celsus, Galen, Ruffus, and Pollux were in the same case. The term does not occur in the works either of the classical lexicographers or of the mediæval translators. The first correlation of the tendon with the name of Achilles known to Professor Macalister is in the great work of Vesalius (1543), who, in describing the tendon of the calf muscles, points out that, on account of the projection of the heel behind the level of the tibia, this tendon is thrown backwards, and forms with the tibia a triangle whose base is the length of the calcaneal projection, while on each side of the tendon there is a lateral concavity: *Atque hæc ea demum est cavitas* (he goes on to say) *cui Homerus Achillem in Hectoris crure funem traiecitisse, illumque ad cursum relictum, circum mœnia Troiæ traxisse cecinit.* Columbus writing in 1559, and Valverdu in 1607 refer to the same story in connection with the tendon. In 1588 Bauhin suggested another explanation in the words *Achilles hæc tantum parte mortalis erat*, where allusion is made to the story of the Greek hero having been dipped by his mother into the Styx, whose waters made him invulnerable except at the heel by which she held him. It was not till the beginning of the eighteenth century that the term "tendo Achillis" became definitely established in anatomical nomenclature. Professor Macalister decides, against the opinion of Hyrtl, that the name had its origin not in the Stygian legend but in the Homeric account of the dragging of the body of Hector by the heel and that the genesis of the term is to be found in the passage of Vesalius above quoted.

The number of so-called medical journals published in Paris which in 1897 was 186, and in 1898 had risen to 206, is now 215. A considerable proportion of these, however, are more of the nature of advertising circulars than scientific periodicals.

#### NOTES ON HEALTH RESORTS.

THOUGH the literature on the treatment at Brides-les-Bains and the neighbouring spa of Salins-Moutiers is already considerable owing to the writings of Dr. Delastre and others, the little book by Dr. Samways' will be welcomed by English readers. The mineral waters and the indications for the two spas are here described, whilst the illustrations give the reader a tolerable idea of the aspect of Brides-les-Bains and of the deep valley of the Doron de Bozel in which the place is situated. Dr. Samways remarks that health resorts may be divided into those (1) which deserve to be popular but are not; (2) those which deserve to be popular, and are; (3) those which are popular, but do not deserve to be; and (4) those which neither are popular nor deserve to be. He places Brides-Salins in the first group, but we believe that classification in the second group would already be more correct.

*Schoenberg*, in the Wurtemberg Black Forest, lies at an elevation of 650 metres (about 2,130 feet) between the Enzthal and the Nagoldthal, amidst extensive pine forests, with sufficient protection from excessive winds. The new sanatorium for consumptives is about a quarter of an hour distant from the village. The open-air, dietetic, and modern methods of treatment are carried out under the management of Dr. G. Schroeder, who, since the recent death of Dr. Baudach, has been medical director of the establishment. Dr. Schroeder was formerly one of the doctors at the Hohenhonnef Sanatorium.

<sup>1</sup> *Brides-les-Bains and Salins-Moutiers, Savoy, France.* By D. W. Samways, M.A., M.D., B.C., D.Sc. Enfield: The Graphotone Company. 1899. (Demy 8vo, pp. 48, numerous illustrations. Gratis.)

As a result of the special report recently submitted by Major Firth, R.A.M.C., on the water supply and general sanitary condition of Bannu, Punjab, measures will be taken to remove the defects, which seriously endanger the health of the garrison.

PROFESSOR BATTISTA GRASSI has gone to Grosseto in order to complete his researches on the mosquitos concerned in the transmission of malarial infection.